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ABSTRACT

Romania, one of the largest but also one of the poorest nations in Eastern Europe, is moving toward a market economy and a pluralistic society. Romania's educational system reflects a failure to appreciate the value of general secondary education over early specialized vocational training. Basic schooling is compulsory through grade eight, but total enrollment is declining with the birth rate. The Ministry of Education and Sciences (MOES) has coordinated preschool through higher education and scientific research since 1990. MOES sets the curriculum for all primary schools, and there is a highly prescriptive curriculum on the secondary level. Student-teacher ratios are low by international standards, and teacher pay is based on training and experience. Preservice teacher education begins on the secondary level. Students receive textbooks for free, including those texts printed in 13 minority languages. Education spending in Romania is low by international comparisons, and the central government is the source of most funding. The World Bank proposes a five-year education reform program to be implemented by MOES. The project would seek to raise the quality of basic and secondary education, restructure vocational education, and improve educational finance and management. Among the benefits of such a program would be greater employment flexibility in a changing world, a more rational allocation of educational resources, and more generally, improved preparation for Romanian students for the nation's newly democratized mentality. (SG)

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ED 371 988

ROMANIA

EDUCATION REFORM PROJECT

November 1992

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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SO 024 002

This document was prepared by the World Bank to summarize the joint work of the World Bank with the Romanian Ministry of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, and Ministry of Economy and Finance. World Bank missions visited Romania to assist project development during November 1991 (project identification), February 1992 (project preparation) and June 1992 (project preappraisal). Project development was supported by the Commission of the European Communities (EC), Japan Grant Facility, U.K. Know-How Fund, British Council, and Governments of France and the Netherlands. These agencies financed specialist visits to Romania, study visits abroad for Romanian education specialists, and local workshops in Romania.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCD	Casa Corpull Didactica (Teachers' House)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
COSA	Council on Occupational Standards and Assessment
CY	Calendar Year
EC	Commission of the European Communities
EDP	Editura Didactica si Pedagogica
IEA	International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IES	Institute for Education Sciences
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sciences
MOEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
NBC	National Board on Curriculum
NAES	National Assessment and Examinations Service
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
TA	Technical Assistance

DEFINITIONS

Romania is divided into 41 districts called "judets" which form the geograph for both the territorially deconcentrated central government administration a local government system. The districts are in turn divided into 2,948 munic including 260 urban communities and 2,688 rural communities.

Introduction

1. Romania faces a major task of reforming its education system to support the move to a market economy and pluralistic society. With a population of 23 million, Romania is one of the largest countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) but also the second poorest (after Albania), with a GDP per capita at US$1640 (World Bank Atlas Methodology, 1990). As elsewhere in the region, Romania's once enviable education system was configured by several decades of central planning to train the majority of youth in specialized job-specific skills and thereby "supply" labor through schools linked to local state-owned enterprises and farms. Vocationalization of education was extreme in Romania, with only about 4 percent of secondary school-age students enrolled in general academic programs by 1989, compared with 20 to 25 percent in Poland and Hungary. Consequently, enrollment in higher education has been low in Romania at about 10% of the age cohort, compared with an average of about 30% in the OECD countries which also have a diversified secondary school structure.

2. Chronic underinvestment during the previous regime, especially in the 1980s, further eroded the education system. From 1985 to 1989, average annual total expenditure on education was 2.47 percent of GDP. This level has been increased to over 3 percent since 1989--although from a smaller GDP--but remains low compared with other Central and Eastern European countries and OECD countries. Historically low levels of spending, combined with ideological rigidities and relative isolation during the previous regime, have left Romania with a school system that is impoverished of up-to-date resource materials and equipment for teaching; teachers, researchers and education policy-makers who have been isolated for many years from professional developments in education and in certain subject areas; school infrastructure that is in many cases decrepit; outdated or broken basic equipment; and education management and financing structures which constrain innovation and efficiency, and limit possibilities for local and private sector involvement.

3. With the decline of manufacturing during the economic transition, longstanding links between youth training and large enterprises are breaking down. Many firms are no longer financially able to absorb school leavers as employees or trainees and are thus losing interest and ability to support school programs. The Government estimates that at the end of the 1990/91 school year, there were approximately 110,000 secondary school graduates entering the labor force, of whom about 40,000 are now registered as unemployed. The limited occupational mobility and difficulty in retraining of middle-aged adult workers prepared through the present secondary school system is apparent in the unemployment that is accompanying economic restructuring. Shifts in the labor market are demanding major changes in the types of occupations for which students are prepared, but school programs have not yet been able to adapt programs toward the sectors with significant growth potential, such as commerce and services, and to increasing private sector opportunities.[1] Local communities, school staff and parents are increasingly aware of the urgent need to reorient educational programs to avoid students being handicapped in the labor market by narrow specialties that limit occupational mobility and increase the risk of unemployment as job content and technology change.

4. Like most other reforming CEE countries, Romania has a developed system for delivering education and shares positive features of education common to industrialized Western European countries (e.g., high primary and secondary participation rates and low repetition rates, strong teacher training in subject matter, structure for teacher certification). Yet, the system does not reflect major lessons and directions of OECD countries. Experience has shown that a strong general preparation of students at secondary level is a far more cost-effective public investment than early specialized vocational training. Curriculum and teaching approaches in OECD countries are seen

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increasingly in terms of developing a student's cognitive abilities and competencies for real-life problem-solving, rather than rote mastery of factual material, which remains central to schooling in Romania. National examinations, used primarily as a selection mechanism in Romania, are in other countries important tools for assessing or certifying education and training outcomes, monitoring school performance, ensuring accountability to the public, and supporting educational change. Education in Romania is characterized by highly centralized decision making. In other countries, school-based professionalism and flexibility in resource management have proven to be more conducive to effective schools. The following sections describe the existing system, highlight key issues, and outline the proposed project.

The Existing System

5. Structure. Basic schooling in Romania is compulsory through grade 8. Coverage coverage has been virtually universal for both boys and girls over the past several decades. It is structured into pre-school (ages 3-6/7), primary (grades 1-4) and gymnasium (grades 5-8). (See Annex 2 for structure of system.) A diversified secondary school structure comprises four-year academic high schools, technical high schools offering four-year day and five-year evening programs, two and three-year vocational schools attached to enterprises, and alternative vocational schools called ucenici, which are attached to cooperatives. Technical, vocational and ucenici programs are usually delivered in a common campus known as a group scholar. These campuses are generally specialized in one or two technical areas, such as textile manufacturing or chemical industry, which reflect the predominant local employer and largest state-owned enterprise and are known as the school's "profile". There are special schools for study in minority languages, arts and sports, foreign language study, and for mildly disabled or handicapped children over 3 years of age.2/ Some school facilities are considered national schools and as such have boarding facilities. Altogether there are more than 28,000 public primary and secondary schools. Post-secondary education is provided through 48 public universities and institutes, recently re-opened technical colleges, and two-year industrial foreman's programs and evening courses for adults which are offered at group scholar. Since 1989, numerous private universities have also sprung up.

6. Enrollment. Total enrollment in education in 1991/92 was about 5.03 million or 22% of Romania's total population. The breakdown by subsector is 14% in pre-school, 54% in primary and gymnasia, 28% in secondary schools, and 4% in higher education. Total enrollment is decreasing slightly as a result of decline in Romania's birth rate since the mid-1980s. This trend can be expected to continue with the more open family planning services since 1989 and with economic recession. The size of the cohort entering the first grade of primary school in 1997 is projected to be 8 percent smaller than the cohort in 1992.

7. Basic Indicators. While the veracity of statistics on education during the Ceaucescu years is questionable and new data collection systems are being developed, Romania's system has certainly been strong in several indicators. Official data indicate high participation rates with 98 percent of primary school-aged children in school, and 85 percent of the secondary school-aged cohort enrolled. Dropout has been reported as low in official statistics, although in the past there have been strong institutional pressures to avoid recognizing dropout. Repetition rates also appear to have been low for at least a generation, with a reported 95-99 percent of students entering grades for the first time in all years of primary and secondary school. Data are not yet available on the educational attainment of the population, and the educational research community in Romania has been working openly only since

2/ The Ministry of Health is responsible for government programs providing care of children under 3 years; care of severely handicapped children is provided through institutions managed by MOLSP.

1990. It is therefore difficult to generalize on student achievement, the effectiveness of Romania's education system and on the relative effectiveness of its constituent parts.

8. Management. Since 1990, the Ministry of Education and Sciences (MOES) has been responsible for managing pre-school, primary and secondary schools, higher education and scientific research.3/ MOES has a staff of about 400 persons and an affiliated Institute for Education Sciences (IES) with about 150 staff. In each of Romania's 41 judets, there is an education inspectorate of 50-70 staff headed by a general inspector who is appointed by MOES. The inspectorate essentially functions as an administrative arm of the central government and as such is responsible for ensuring school quality, aggregating school budget requests and distributing the actual allocations, and for all local school staff hiring. Linked to the inspectorate in each judet is a Casa Corpului Didactic (CCD) or "teachers' house" which in the past was a vehicle for indoctrination of school staff. These facilities are increasingly being used to support professional development of teachers, to facilitate educational research, and to serve wider functions in the community. Primary and secondary schools are managed by headmasters who, since 1990, have been appointed through election by the teachers and then approved by the judet inspectorates and MOES. Each school headmaster is assisted by a pedagogical council, comprised mainly of teachers, who plan and organize the school's work and handle relations with parents, enterprises, and students.

9. Curriculum for basic and secondary education is prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Sciences (MOES). There is a uniform curriculum for all primary schools. At secondary level, academic high schools offer humanities, sciences and math. Curriculum is highly prescriptive, with detailed syllabi developed by MOES to correspond directly to textbook content. During the Ceaucescu years, there was deliberately little coverage of certain topics, especially in the social sciences. In technical high schools, pupils spend approximately one-third of their time in a technical specialty and two-thirds in academic subjects. Vocational schools devote about two-thirds of instructional time to technical study and practice. *Ucenici* programs are largely practice-oriented. Altogether, there are more than 130 technical specialties in the secondary system in Romania.4/ Curriculum in technical subjects may be initiated locally but must be approved by the MOES. The MOES and IES have launched a major curriculum revision effort for general education which is being carried out by groups of subject matter specialists and teachers.

10. Learning Assessment and Selection Mechanisms. Assessment in pre-school and lower primary schooling consists entirely of performance-based, continuous assessment done informally by class teachers. At gymnasium, written tests are administered by teachers each term. Admission to secondary academic and technical schools is by entrance examinations, which combine a national examination with school-based written or oral examinations in each school's field of study. Candidates must declare in advance which secondary school and specialization they will apply for. In order to take the examination, they must travel to the school which has a specialization they hope to study. The examination is delivered by rudimentary means (a limited number of photocopies are sent to each judet and provided to schools where teachers handwrite test items on a blackboard). If a candidate fails to

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3/ Previously, most secondary vocational schools were operated by line ministries, including Ministries of Transport and Telecommunications, Machine Building, Electronics, Forestry, Chemistry, Energy, Mining, Petroleum, Metallurgy, Industrial Construction, Light Industry, Health, Agriculture, Food Industry, Interior and Commerce.

4/ This high degree of specialization in secondary schooling was typical of centrally planned economies and Communist political systems. It enabled the state to engage youth in economic activity at an early age, constrain labor mobility, and to contain development of an intellectual class. By contrast, in OECD countries, the distinction between academic and technical education is becoming increasingly blurred as education focuses on developing a student's cognitive ability to learn and to solve problems in a real-life context. Students of all abilities are being provided a common broad preparation up to at least age 15/16. Thereafter, vocational specialization is likely to be in one of 15-20 broad occupational clusters.

gain a place in his/her intended specialization, s/he must repeat the entire procedure to be considered for another school, thereby often losing a year.5/ Vocational schools admit candidates without examination, but pupils must be accepted as "trainee workers" in an appropriate enterprise. The ucenici programs have no special entrance requirements. Within secondary education, academic subjects are assessed on the basis of written work. Vocational and practical subjects are continuously assessed on the basis of performance on practical work, assignments and oral presentations, as well as written work.

11. Student Certification. The exam at the end of grade eight is essentially a norm-referenced selection mechanism and is not used to certify completion of basic education or to assess overall student achievement. At the end of academic and technical high school, students may take the national Baccalaureate examination, which tests in two compulsory and two elective subjects. Students in technical high schools who do not take this exam may receive a secondary school completion certificate. There is no national qualification for pupils who complete vocational or ucenici programs; exams are set locally by individual schools. The "bac" is a necessary condition for entrance into higher education.6/

12. Teachers and Conditions of Service. MOES estimates that in 1990/91 there were about 237,000 teachers on its payroll in pre-university education, an increase of about 15 percent over the previous year. This increase is partly due to the administrative shift to MOES of secondary schools and temporary staff that were once under sectoral ministries, but it may also signal a worrisome trend toward overstaffing in the sector. MOEF estimates that the total number of education sector staff, including administrative personnel, increased by about 28 percent during 1991. Student:teacher ratios are already in the lower range of international norms, particularly in gymnasium and in higher education. A teachers' pay is derived from a salary scale based on the teaching degree attained and years of experience. Teachers' salaries are 10% below the national average for others with similar levels of educational attainment and 15% lower than the average for the industrial sector. Nearly half of all teachers in primary and secondary education have 18 or more years of service. Since 1989, teachers' unions have played an increasing role in publicizing issues of their conditions of service and broader concerns about education policy.

13. Pre-Service Teacher Training. In basic education, pre-service training is offered at the pedagogical high school or ecole normale in each judet, which provides general education combined with practical and theoretical training in pedagogy. Practical training is provided through direct contacts with qualified teachers in "application schools", at an average of 125 hours per year. Beginning in the 1992/1993 school year, MOES will extend this program from four to five years. Secondary school teachers of academic or technical theory subjects attend university programs with all other students, matriculating to become teacher trainees at the end of their fourth year of study. In their fifth year of university, these students study general pedagogy, psychology and subject didactics. Professional practical training is limited, averaging one hour a week during their last year at university. Teachers of "practice" classes in technical/vocational programs are usually technicians without higher education degrees or pedagogical training. In general, secondary school teachers are well-prepared in subject

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5/ This form of selection is typical of the former socialist countries and has three principal drawbacks. First, the path to academic study is highly biased in favor of families already having higher education backgrounds and from urban areas. Second, it was designed during a time when children of parents employed as industrial workers had other access to positions of leadership through the political party and to an equality of material benefits through administratively set wages for low skill jobs; neither of these elements will be sustained, thus making the selection system in Romania, and elsewhere, unsustainable. Third, it reinforces elements of central planning, particularly very limited labor mobility, preselection by the state of the number and variety of available jobs, and the subordinated relationship of the student/worker to the enterprise.

6/ For entrance to public university, students must pass not only the "Bac" but also examinations set by the specific faculty of the particular university s/he is seeking to enter. These exams vary widely within and between universities.

matter, but in teaching methods are trained mainly to maximize levels of student recall, rather than to help students synthesize and evaluate information.

14. Teacher Certification and In-Service Training. After their pre-service training, primary and secondary teachers begin their professional activities as "probati[illegible]ers" for three years. At the end of this period, they are licensed to become teachers if they pass a tes[illegible] which includes subject knowledge, psychology, didactics and practical demonstration in a classroom. At this stage, they obtain a national diploma called *definativate*. During the first ten years of their professional career, primary and secondary teachers voluntarily attend in-service training, with the incentive that salary increases are linked with professional upgrading. After five years, teachers may attain "second-degree" status and after ten years may become "first degree" teachers. Reaching each degree involves an assessment similar to that for the *definativate*. These tests are prepared during vacation periods and offered at the *ecoles normale* for primary teachers, and, for secondary teachers, at university faculties, the CCDs and the laboratory for teacher training at IES. In addition, teachers' activities are monitored by subject inspectors under the judet inspectorate. The inspectors also provide professional development through on-the-job-training and short seminars, usually offered at the 41 CCDs.

15. Textbooks. The Government has a longstanding policy of providing textbooks to schools without charge to students, on the basis of one book per subject for each student at each grade and in 13 minority group languages, in addition to Romanian.7/ The governments since 1989 have been committed to continuing free textbook provision, at least during the economic transition. It is proving increasingly difficult, however, for the state to maintain previous levels of supply to schools in the face of cost increases.8/ As was typical of centrally planned economies, nearly all textbooks used in schools are produced by the state-owned and subsidized publishing house, Editura Didactica si Pedagogica (EDP), which is under MOES.9/ EDP has approximately 200 staff in Bucharest and additional staff in other regions to produce minority language texts. Textbook authors are selected by MOES. EDP publishes about 500 titles. Approximately 80 percent of the textbooks are produced at the central printing factory of the Ministry of Culture. In past years, books were transported to the judets by a state-owned distributor, although beginning this year they are being shipped direct from the printer to the judet inspectorate. Low grade covers, variable quality of text paper, and weak bindings of the books result in rapid disintegration. Presentation of material is dense, often in tiny print sizes to conserve on paper and with few illustrations and diagrams. There are no accompanying teacher guides to support textbooks. Very few textbooks have been updated or replaced since 1989. Because the government subsidy goes through MOES to EDP, and there is generally only one approved text for each subject, schools have no choice in selection of core textbooks.

16. Supplementary Materials. It is difficult to generalize on the provision of supplementary materials, as there appears to be disparity between comparatively well-provided central urban schools and rural or suburban technical schools. About 75 percent of primary and secondary

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7/ In practical terms, this means that a secondary school student should receive about 9 books per school year.

8/ MOES decides the number of textbook volumes to be produced annually using population statistics from schools and the available budget envelope after salaries. Judet inspectorates are provided with allocations, on the basis of which they may purchase state-published books at prices set by MOES. In 1992, a copy of a typical textbook cost 95 lei, of which 36-46 lei was provided as a subsidy to the state textbook publisher. Subsidies are currently being paid in arrears one year after the judets have received textbooks. To continue operation, the state publisher is having to seek overdraft funding from the National Bank until subsidy payments are received from MOES.

9/ There is no OECD country in which the state designs, manufactures and distributes all textbooks through state institutions. The role of the state is generally limited to setting curricular standards and textbook guidelines which private publishers may utilize in competition for public purchasing. Local private publishers make use of copyright and services from many firms, both local and foreign.

schools in Romania have a library of some sort, although there are wide variations in the size and quality of collections,10/ storage conditions, reading facilities and staffing. The content of school libraries is generally limited to what was allowed before 1989, less the discarded ideological material. Science laboratories and practical facilities for technical/vocational training exist in most secondary schools but suffer from outdated or broken equipment and lack of funds for consumables and spare parts. Scientific apparatus is most often used to demonstrate set experiments, rather than for "hands-on" student-directed learning. Film, television, and audio cassettes are rarely used in schools. The use of computers in schools has been increasing in recent years with hardware acquired mainly through donation by enterprises and some external sources. Their use is often limited, however, to teaching of programming languages or to teaching students of the informatics specialty, with much less attention to broader applications of computing.

17. School Buildings. While both rural and urban communities have school buildings that appear to be well-used and conscientiously maintained at present, there are emerging strains that will require attention in the medium-term for sustainability of the system. There has been little school construction over the last decade, and many buildings are in need of renovation or refurbishment. Shortage of classroom space in urban areas has required many schools to operate in double or triple shifts with the overall effect of shortened class periods. Decline in real levels of school operating budgets in recent years has meant inevitable shortcuts or neglect in building maintenance. It is not uncommon in rural areas during winter for classrooms to be closed due to lack of wood for heating.

18. Expenditures. As a percentage of GDP, Romania's spending on education at about 3.6% of GDP in 1991 is low by most international comparisons.11/ This level reflects an increased priority over pre-1989 levels (average total yearly spending from 1985-1989 was 2.4% of GDP), although in real terms expenditure has been declining. Total expenditure in 1992 is expected to be about Lei 185 billion. Expenditure per pupil is also relatively low by international comparison and varies among judets for reasons that are not transparent in the budget process. Government expenditure on education during 1991 represented about 14% of the central government budget. About 15% of expenditures on education are for secondary technical schools under ministries other than MOES. Of the total MOES budget, about 80% is for salaries, with the remainder mainly for operating expenses and core textbooks. MOES estimates it will spend only US$2.5 million equivalent (about US$.50 per student) in 1992 for textbooks. As in past years, capital investment in schools is very limited, representing only about 2% of the approved 1992 budget for the sector.

19. Sources of Financing. The central government budget is the main source of financing for pre-university education and has covered 80-90% of annual education expenditures since 1989. At present, local governments have no responsibility for financing education, although their role is under discussion in the broader context of local government reform.12/ The second largest source of financing has traditionally been state enterprises, also centrally budgeted, which finance stipends and student accommodation for two-year vocational programs and contribute to the costs of pre-school for children of the parents they employ. These enterprise contributions have been declining in recent years and now account for only about 6 percent of total. Parents finance part of pre-school costs, copy books

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10/ Although some school libraries have upwards of 50,000 books, two thirds have fewer than 5,000 and a quarter have fewer than 1,500 books.

11/ While comparisons between countries of varying income levels must be drawn with care, it is illustrative to note that total spending on education as a percentage of GDP averaged 5.7% in OECD countries in 1988. In other CEE countries, spending was 3.8% of GDP in Poland (1991), 5.3% in the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (1988), and 5.4% in Hungary (1988). Expenditures in Algeria and Malaysia, which are roughly comparable to Romania in total population and level of income per capita, range from 7-9% of GDP.

12/ See Romania: Decentralization and Local Government Reform, Yellow Cover Report, World Bank, EC1IN, 1992.

during primary and secondary education and, in some cases, contribute cash or in-kind support for school initiatives such as student trips, academic prizes, or purchase of school equipment or supplementary texts. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many families also pay substantial hourly fees for private tutoring to increase students' competitiveness in examinations.

20. Budget Process. Guided by input norms formulated by MOES and MOEF for numbers of students and teachers, individual schools are required to prepare annual budgets. School budgets are collected by the judet inspectorate and consolidated into a sector budget by the MOES. In practice, budgeting is a process of incrementalism and non-transparent bargaining, which does not necessarily ensure equity among districts or individual schools and has few transparent links between allocation of resources and school performance. MOES submits its budget to MOEF where it is consolidated with proposals of other agencies, reviewed by the Council of Ministers and forwarded to Parliament for approval. As a rule, MOEF distributes funds to MOES on a quarterly basis, although during the high inflation and fiscal tightening since 1990, budgets have been reviewed and allocations made on a more frequent basis. MOES presently conducts a comprehensive monthly budget review, which involves cumbersome resubmission and aggregation of detailed school level budgets.

Key Issues

21. Employability of Secondary School Leavers. Continuation of the tracking of high numbers of youth into narrowly specialized, technical and vocational training at a relatively early age will exacerbate the high levels of unemployment among graduates and may be leading to a serious secondary school dropout problem. It could also contribute to increasing requirements for costly adult education and retraining as shifts occur in the structure of the economy and as technology advances. While technical/vocational programs will continue to be an important feature of the Romanian education system, as in other European countries, a strong general preparation will need to be emphasized as a foundation for further study and training and on-the-job skills development. The high number of technical specialties in secondary schools (more than 130) needs to be reorganized and updated to reflect current practices and trends in OECD countries, where vocational programs are usually based on 15-20 occupational families. With the decline of many unviable large enterprises and under pressure from local authorities, many secondary schools are applying to the MOES to change their profiles or are attempting to restructure programs on their own, but the schools and the MOES have almost no experience with alternate models of organizing technical education at secondary school level. A more systematic approach, which preserves local initiative, is required to address this issue.

22. Deteriorating Provision of Educational Materials. The difficult conditions created by years of low investment in textbooks, materials and equipment for schools have actually worsened since 1989. Extensive school visits indicate that basic textbook provision is falling far short of requirements, especially in rural areas. In the 1991/1992 school year, EDP produced approximately 22 million new textbooks for pre-university education, which was the maximum that could be produced with the textbook allocation. An additional 12 million textbooks were supposed to be reused from previous years, but there has been no systematic evaluation as to whether this arrangement has met actual requirements. Shortages have been exacerbated by ineffective distribution. Development and production of new, updated textbooks has been limited by inflationary pressure on the education budget, which constrains expenditure on non-salary items, and from substantial increases in production and raw material costs, particularly paper. To cope with shortages, in some cases, teachers recite from course syllabi for students to transfer to their copy books; in other cases, teachers are developing their own materials, sometimes at personal expense. In some regions, textbook stock is available at local bookshops, and parents may purchase titles their children did not receive in school. While private publishers and booksellers have mushroomed since 1989 (an estimated 250 private publishers are currently active in Romania) and include a few that are specializing in educational materials, development of the educational publishing that is characteristic of most OECD countries is constrained by the present structure of subsidies to the state monopoly producer.

23. Inefficient Student Selection. The existing examinations and assessment structures that drive what is taught in schools and to a large extent determine a child's opportunities for further schooling, higher education and employment are a poor tool for selection. Test items and scoring methods are not developed to modern standards. Delivery of examinations in non-uniform handwritten or oral presentation creates uneven testing conditions among schools. Students placed through examination in a vocational program have little opportunity later on to move among specialties or into technical or academic programs as interests or abilities develop. There also appears to be gender typing of technical specialties which may discourage both girls and boys from matching study programs with interests, aptitudes and employment potential. The rigid selection and very limited places for students in academic high schools reinforce a school culture in which the "best" or advantaged students are singled out early and expectations and opportunities of other students are lowered. If it is now expected that the balance of responsibility for occupational choice and management of one's work opportunities during adulthood will shift increasingly from the state to the individual, appropriate adjustments will need to be made in the public accountability of examinations, and professional career counseling will be needed to assist students either prior to or during secondary school.

24. Outdated Curriculum and Approaches to Teaching/Learning. Past isolation and ideological stricture have left widespread need for updating traditional disciplines and for introducing new subjects and interdisciplinary and pedagogical approaches. The existing curriculum in general education is defined mainly in terms of an "olympic" level of factual information to be acquired in specific subjects, and does not yet incorporate broader social, cognitive, or learning process objectives that should be attainable by the majority of students.13/ New priorities are in social sciences, modern history, additional foreign languages and in cross-curricular themes, such as civics, the environment, European affairs, technology and its applications. In technical/vocational programs, curriculum needs to be based on systematic analysis of tasks common to a family of occupations, as is increasingly common in OECD countries. Classroom activity is presently centered almost exclusively on lecture and rote learning, and needs to incorporate approaches that encourage practical problem solving, group process, self-reliance, and initiative. At secondary level in particular, both pre- and in-service teacher training concentrate on developing knowledge of subject matter, with insufficient attention to pedagogical strategies and teaching practice.

25. Rigid Central Financing and Management. Heavy reliance on central government revenues, the allocation of the education budget according to rigid norms, and the highly prescriptive management of education content are all stifling innovation and initiative by local governments, communities and schools themselves. There are few incentives for internal efficiency (e.g. for raising student:teacher ratios to use staff more efficiently or to consolidate schools and staffing within districts) under the present practice of budgeting in non-fungible line items. District level inspectorates serve mainly as a conduit for funding and have little scope in financial management or for using resources to stimulate change and address local priorities. In turn, it is difficult for school headmasters to function truly as innovative managers or leaders of their institutions. Among the consumers of education, there is a strong sense of entitlement to "free" education provided by the state, which poses considerable political obstacles to cost-consciousness, cost-sharing and cost-recovery measures. The highly centralized financing and control of the education system requires that MOES devote most of its own staff resources to overseeing delivery of education and reacting to urgencies of day-to-day operation of the system, thus making it difficult to fulfill a role in monitoring and analysis of the sector, strategic

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13/ It is widely misunderstood, in Romania as elsewhere, that high performance in academic olympics indicates high quality of a nation's school system. This is no more the case than having a country's olympic gold medal athlete imply that a nation's youth is physically fit. Achievement of the top one or two percent is not sufficient for a national objective in a school system. There are two main ingredients to a high quality system: (a) the student achievement on the national curriculum distributed in a small variation and with a high mean; and (b) the kind of curriculum which embodies the economic challenges facing adults in an openly competitive society in which an individual may be required over a lifetime to shift occupations as many as five

planning and broad policy formulation. Clearly, there is ample scope for increasing efficiency and quality through more decentralized approaches to education management and financing.

26. Weak Institutional Capacity. Existing central institutions in the sector are hard-pressed to lead and support educational reform. Romanian professionals in curriculum, assessment and career counseling, and teacher training are relatively few in number and have limited exposure to international debate or current practices in their fields. Knowledge and skills in finance and market-oriented management practices are seriously lacking at all levels of education administration and in the entities responsible for textbook production. Sector policy analysis and research are made difficult by the past neglect of these functions and by lack of reliable data. Institutional capacity and the reform process are also hindered by vestiges of the past--the managerial culture of central planning, attitudes toward information-sharing, negative images of various sector institutions and consultative mechanisms, and the role of teachers and students as "followers" of central mandate.

Government Strategy

27. With the fall of Ceaucescu in December 1989, the successor government moved quickly to consolidate the education sector by combining the former agencies for Pre-University Education and Higher Education and Science into a single body. The majority of secondary technical schools which had been operated by various sectoral ministries were shifted to the management of this new ministry. The Institute for Education Sciences (IES) was reestablished in 1990 to support policy-makers and has since initiated a remarkable number of research and pilot projects and forged many international links. Reform and decentralization have progressed most swiftly in higher education. Universities now have substantially increased autonomy in self-government, personnel management, curriculum and instructional affairs, and contractual relationships with industry. The Government is articulating broader sector reforms in a proposed education law, still being debated, which is expected to include an important provision for extension of compulsory basic education. In anticipation of this change and in an effort to update pre-university education, the MOES has established a National Board for Curriculum Reform which is charged with revising curriculum for basic and general secondary schooling. It is envisaged that new curricula in technical/vocational education will be formulated and implemented initially in pilot schools during the next five years.

Role of the Bank

28. First Steps. Following a World Bank review of the social sectors14/, in mid-1991, the Government requested the Bank to provide financial assistance for employment, education and training. It was agreed that assistance would be required on a broad front to support development of well-coordinated programs for: (a) income support to the unemployed and those destitute for other reasons; (b) proactive training and job creation; (c) labor market intermediation, including assistance in mass layoffs, vacancy information and job matching services, counseling and career information; and (d) appropriate preparation of youth for the labor market.

29. In view of the vast investment requirements in these areas, the numerous institutions and stakeholders concerned, and the country's lack of prior experience with Bank project implementation in the social sectors, priorities had to be carefully determined. It was agreed that,

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14/ Romania--Human Resources and the Transition to a Market Economy, A World Bank Country Study, formally published in 1992.

Initially, two complementary projects would be developed in parallel. The proposed first education project would support updating of basic and secondary education, with emphasis on restructuring secondary education. Delaying investment in these lower levels of schooling, from which the majority of youth enter directly into the labor market, would likely result in higher medium-term costs of unemployment and adult retraining. The parallel project, being developed with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, would strengthen programs to assist the unemployed and groups that are vulnerable during the economic transition. It would include support for adult training, including management and retraining, through regional training institutions.

30. Support for Higher Education and Scientific Research. Many bilateral donors, non-governmental agencies, and international exchange relationships are already active in Romanian higher education and research. A private university and training sector is emerging even without government initiative. Yet, there remains an urgent need to address systemic and policy issues, such as rationalization of the numerous small higher education and research institutions, accreditation and quality assurance of public and private universities, allocation and mobilization of research funding, and identification of priority investments in upgrading of infrastructure for higher education and research. Recognizing that there are significant requirements in post-secondary education, the Government and the Bank are launching a joint policy study on higher education, science and technology. It is expected that this work over the next year will lead to development of a strategy and investment framework that can be supported by a World Bank project in Higher Education/Science and Technology.

Objectives of Education Reform Project

31. The project aims to: (a) update and improve quality of basic and secondary education so that pupils will be well-prepared to function in a market economy and democracy; (b) launch restructuring of secondary technical and vocational education to increase employability and occupational mobility of graduates; and (c) improve education financing and management by increasing efficiency in allocation and use of central government resources and enhancing local and private involvement. Project objectives would be achieved by strengthening capability and public accountability of national institutions and by fostering change at the school level through pilot programs for innovation and quality improvement, model schools, and increased district and school autonomy in management of resources. To the extent possible, the project would build upon existing institutions, the many strengths of the present system, and the strong educational tradition in Romania.

Project Description

32. The Education Reform Project, comprising three components, would be implemented over five years by the Ministry of Education and Sciences (MOES) in close cooperation with its affiliated Institute for Education Sciences (IES) and the education inspectorates in the country's 41 judets (US$179.5 million equivalent base cost; and US$227 million total cost, including contingencies). It would provide technical assistance, training, fellowships, books and materials, equipment and software, and rehabilitation of facilities to support the proposed reforms. The structure of project components would be:

I. Raising Quality of Basic and Secondary Education
   A. Curriculum and Assessment
   B. Teacher Training and Professional Support
   C. Educational Materials

II. Restructuring Secondary Technical/Vocational Education
   A. Curriculum Revision and Model Schools
   B. Occupational Standards and Assessment
   C. Vocational Teacher Training

III. Improving Education Finance and Management
   A. Resource Allocation, Management and Mobilization
   B. Reform Coordination and Implementation

I. Raising Quality of Basic and Secondary Education 15/

33. Curriculum and Assessment (US$9.0 million). The project would support reorganization of the National Board on Curriculum (NBC) to strengthen its capacity to prepare and implement new curricula in basic and secondary education. NBC's organization, objectives and functions would be specified, and its management and material support would be strengthened. The Board's coordinators and working groups of teachers, subject matter and curriculum specialists would receive training or specialist assistance in current approaches to curriculum and recent developments in new subject areas and cross-curricular themes. Student attainment targets would be tested and refined

15/ Estimated project costs in this chapter are provided without physical or price contingencies.

in a network of the existing primary level application schools and ten pilot secondary schools in three judets. Pilot schools would receive special support in teacher and headmaster training, educational materials and equipment, assessment techniques and tools, and the introduction of career counseling of students. Educational publishers would be enlisted to work with the Board's specialists and pilot schools to develop experimental teaching and learning materials. Following trial in the pilot schools, the Board would present new curricula to the Minister of Education for approval and introduction countrywide.

34. Measures to improve the quality of educational assessment and examinations would support and drive the planned changes in curriculum and the extended duration of compulsory general education. Local expertise in measurement techniques and exam administration would be developed through overseas training of MOES and IES staff. In-country training in basic principles and techniques of modern assessment would be provided to non-specialist MOES/IES staff, selected teachers, potential examiners and item writers. Orientation and support materials would be developed and disseminated to schools throughout the country. In tandem with the curriculum reform, new syllabi would be developed for the two major examinations (the exam at the end of gymnasia and the baccalaureate). Immediate support would be provided to the Curriculum and Assessment Unit of the MOES to improve the physical quality of examinations (e.g., through high-speed photocopying, computer hardware and software and an adequate supply of consumables). This Unit and the existing National Commission on Assessment and Examinations would be developed gradually during the project into a semi-autonomous agency with appropriate staffing, premises and equipment. The aim is for a National Assessment and Examinations Service (NAES) to be fully operational and partly self-financing through examination fees by 1997.

35. This subcomponent would also earmark funding to help ensure Romania's participation in the major international assessments of education, such as the IEA research projects, which would improve understanding of the learning achievement of Romanian students in relation to that of students in other countries.

36. The project would provide technical assistance (68 staff months foreign and 286 staff months local), local and overseas training and study visits (58 staff months), printed materials, rehabilitation of facilities for the NAES, school and office equipment, and computer hardware and software.

37. Teacher Training and Professional Support (US$12.9 million). In conjunction with the changes in curriculum, assessment and textbooks, the existing system of pre- and in-service teacher training will need to be strengthened. In primary education, the focus would be on updating pedagogical approaches and adjusting the teacher training curriculum to support introduction of improved textbooks and examinations. The project would provide fellowships and local workshops in modern pedagogical strategies and teacher training techniques for selected members of the NBC sub-working group on primary education. Similar training would then be designed and delivered locally to directors of the 41 *ecoles normales*, teachers in the application schools, and inspectorate staff responsible for primary education. School headmasters would receive training to enhance their role in the management of curriculum change and on-the-job coaching of teachers. The *ecoles normales* and application schools would be provided with basic photocopying and audio-visual equipment, books and materials, and consumables to support teacher training. The project would also support review of the present structure of teacher training and the mechanisms for gauging future demand for teachers in light of the projected decline in the numbers of students entering primary school.

38. In secondary general education, the various institutions involved in teacher training would be assisted to improve the balance between subject matter and pedagogical training, better coordinate their respective activities, and provide more direct in-service support to teachers. The universities of Bucharest, Cluj, Craiova, Iasi, and Timisoara would introduce specialized modular training programs in pedagogy for pre-service teacher trainees. Links would be developed between each of

these universities and the CCD in that particular city. These five CCDs would be developed as regional educational centers for in-service teacher training and resource centers to support judet inspectorates and teachers. Application schools would be designated in each of the regions. Links among the CCDs, application schools and the IES would also be strengthened to support the carrying out and dissemination of educational research.

39. The project would provide technical assistance for design of training programs (54 staff months), fellowships abroad (75 staff months), seminars and local training (41 staff months), rehabilitation of facilities of the five CCDs that would serve as regional educational centers, equipment and materials for teacher training institutions, CCDs, application schools and the IES teacher training laboratory.

40. Educational Materials (US$92.9 million). In the initial two years of implementation, the project would provide transitional financing (total of US$8.6 million) to help assure a continuing supply of core textbooks to primary and secondary schools. Financing would be provided according to an agreed program of core titles, numbers of volumes to be produced, source, cost, distribution methods and financing.

41. Beginning in the second school year of the project, the component would also provide a diversity of upgraded textbooks to meet the new curriculum requirements, by creating the conditions in which schools may have a choice of textbooks (see Annex for details of implementation). The existing state support and special benefits provided to Editura Didactica si Pedagogica would be phased out, and EDP would be required to compete with private publishers in textbook provision. A semi-autonomous board for textbook review would be established, along with 12 subject panels, to assess publishers' proposed textbook manuscripts against an agreed set of quality criteria. Initially, not more than three or four options would be approved per title, so as to ensure economies of scale in print runs. Publishers whose manuscripts are approved by the board could apply to MOES for some training support in publishing management. The approved textbooks would be exhibited by the publishers in yearly fairs held in each judet. Schools would thereafter order their selections from publishers, through the local inspectorates, based on "school book funds" that would be allocated by MOES to judets on a per capita basis. Payment for books would be made to the publishers or the publishers' agent for distribution. It is expected that during the life of the project, about 250 titles for grades one to twelve (about half of the present number of titles) could be provided through the restructured textbook provision mechanism.

42. In addition, an injection of supplementary materials for teachers (books, magazines, consumables for preparing materials) would be organized at the CCDs in each judet. The component would also develop the staff expertise and resource materials of the Center for New Educational Technology (CNET), located in the IES, and support its work with about 20 pilot schools in 6-7 judets to facilitate innovative uses of computers in Romanian schools.

43. The project would finance budgetary support (first, as transition support to ensure continued provision of textbooks in the initial years of the project and, beginning in the second year of the project, as school book funds), "seed money" for publishers to develop textbook proposals approved by the textbook board, the direct costs of supplying sample textbooks for exhibition, technical assistance (16 staff months foreign), fellowship abroad (30 months) for the textbook board and CNET, local training, books and resource materials, computer hardware and software.

II. Restructuring Secondary Technical/Vocational Education

44. Curriculum Revision and Model Schools (US$45.5 million). The project would develop a revised model of secondary technical education that delays vocational training until grade eleven. The current 130 vocational specialties would be restructured into curricula based on 15-20

broad families of occupations (e.g., agriculture, electronics, communication, business administration, sales and marketing, hotel and tourism, mechanical power). Modules on entrepreneurship ("market skills") would also be developed for integration into each occupational family. Curriculum development teams from developmental schools in five judets would be organized to write the new curricula, define specifications for required equipment and educational resource materials, and develop a plan to evaluate the new curricula as they are implemented. The writing teams would be supported by advisory groups comprising technical specialists, employers, employee representatives, and line ministry staff in the occupations concerned.

45. In each of the 41 judets, 2-3 group scholar would be identified as model schools to receive special support in implementing the new curricula. Each judet would select 10-12 of the occupational families for implementation in its cluster of schools. In each model school, in-service training would be provided to school managers and staff, facilities would be renovated, and new equipment and educational resource materials would be provided. The schools would also introduce career counselling programs, for which materials development and staff training would be developed and financed through the proposed Employment and Social Protection Project.

46. The project would finance consultants (71 staff months foreign and 427 staff months local) to assist with development and implementation of curriculum, short-term fellowships abroad (25 staff months) for key curriculum development teams and lead instructors in model schools, rehabilitation of facilities, equipment, books and materials.

47. Occupational Standards and Assessment (US$1.8 million). To help ensure that curricula and testing in vocational programs are well-founded on knowledge and skills used in the workplace and comparable to practices in most OECD countries, the project would define and update occupational standards and certification practices. A Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment (COSA) would be established to guide development of standards in youth, adult, and enterprise training programs. COSA would be a tripartite standing body of representatives of employers, employees (trade unions), and relevant government agencies. The project would develop appropriate management structures for COSA and would train a small supporting office staff. A documentation resource center under COSA would be provided with materials on occupational classification and test items from other countries. The center would establish its own automated database for access to materials on international standards and assessment, a repository of materials developed in Romania, and records on occupational certificates issued by COSA. Job standard writing and review teams and a cadre of local consultants would be trained to assist local enterprises, employment and training institutions to develop tests and verify that testing meets COSA standards. It is expected that during the life of the project, the COSA office would become sufficiently operational to support standards for about 300 specific occupations.

48. The project would finance technical assistance (22 staff months foreign and 62 staff months local) to assist with development and implementation of COSA and its staff, short-term fellowships for key COSA members and staff (121 staff months), local training, financing for direct costs (e.g., travel and per diem) for writing and review teams, equipment and materials for the COSA staff unit.

49. Secondary Vocational Teacher Training (US$11.9 million). New teacher training programs would be initiated to prepare instructors who can teach either theory or practice in the restructured vocational schools. Vocational teacher training curricula and materials of other OECD countries would be reviewed and adapted for Romania. The required competencies in pedagogy would be redefined, and educational resource materials and equipment to implement an improved pedagogical curriculum would be specified. Teacher training programs would also be developed in the 15-20 occupational groupings of the new vocational curricula. Certification policies for vocational teachers would be revised to take account of the changing competency requirements. The revised pre-service programs would be implemented at five selected higher education institutions.

50. The project would finance foreign technical assistance (87 staff months) to assist with development and implementation of curriculum, short-term fellowships abroad (81 months) for key staff in curriculum development and lead staff at selected institutions, and equipment and materials for implementation of curricula in selected institutions.

III. Improving Education Financing and Management

51. Resource Allocation, Management and Mobilization (US$3.0 million). The project would introduce mechanisms to increase efficiency in use of education resources, devolve autonomy in resource management, and diversify sources of financing for education. Appropriation formulas, adapted during the first year of the project from examples used in other OECD countries, would be introduced by MOEF/MOES for all levels of education. Expenditure authority and flexibility to shift savings among budget categories would be increasingly devolved to schools and universities. In parallel with the changes in resource allocation, school inspectorates and local administrative staff would be provided with training, basic equipment and software to improve capability in financial analysis and increase awareness of cost-effectiveness and strategies for better utilization of staff, physical and financial resources. School headmasters would also receive orientation training in these areas.

52. To improve the information base for decision-making in the sector, the systems and categories for collecting data on schools would be revised, and a school monitoring and performance improvement system would be introduced. Regional education resource centers would be established in five cities to provide materials and other support to inspectorate staff and headmasters within their regions. Technical and program support would be provided for the ongoing policy research of IES on decentralization and management in education.

53. Studies, local workshops and pilot trials would be carried out to assist formulation of new policies for resource mobilization in education. These activities would be undertaken mainly by Romanian researchers with limited foreign technical assistance. Activities would focus on feasibility of earmarked local education levies, user fees in non-compulsory education, student loan and scholarship programs, and the role of enterprises in financing education.

54. The project would finance technical assistance (22 staff months foreign and 9 staff months local), fellowships abroad (7 months), local training, computer hardware and software, and direct costs of policy research.

55. Reform Coordination and Implementation (US$2.5 million). Success of the education reforms will depend heavily on coordination, efficient and effective administration, information-sharing among implementing units and public information (e.g., communication between MOES/IES and teachers, teacher union representatives, parents, local authorities, Parliamentarians, employers, publishers, the media and other stakeholders) on the changes and opportunities being introduced. A coordination committee and reform project coordination unit (PCU) are being established in MOES to coordinate overall project implementation, and monitor activities to ensure that the project objectives and agreed policy measures are attained. The daily, detailed implementation of components of the project would be the responsibility of each concerned MOES department or agency. It is expected that the PCU would coordinate other external financing, in addition to that of the World Bank, that is being directed to the reform efforts outlined above. Assistance would be provided to the PCU and key implementing departments of MOES and IES in the planning and management of project activities, procurement, project accounts and auditing, communication and dissemination (including media relations) and monitoring and evaluation.

56. The project would finance technical assistance (93 staff months foreign), basic office equipment and vehicles for the PCU.

Project Benefits

57. The project could be expected to yield the following major benefits:

(a) secondary school graduates who can be more flexibly employed and trained in a modern and changing economy;

(b) a general preparation of youth that will contribute to the "new mentality" in Romania (values and knowledge appropriate for participatory democracy, self-reliance and initiative in a market economy, and European integration);

(c) more reliable and valid school-leaving, selection, and occupational certification examinations delivered in a manner that offers a fair chance to all candidates and increases public accountability in education and training;

(d) fair competition and increased opportunities in the local private sector for publishing, printing and distribution of educational materials;

(e) greater diversity, durability and higher quality in the materials used in all schools throughout the country;

(f) more rational allocation and use of scarce fiscal resources for education;

(g) greater transparency, equity and incentives for efficiency in budgeting mechanisms for schools and universities;

(h) more professional financial and educational management in schools and inspectorates and strengthening of the MOES staff capacity for professional policy analysis and technical leadership; and

(i) policies that will mobilize additional local and non-governmental resources for education.

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